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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Mr. Stanley S. Carpenter
Director of Territorial Affairs
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

Dear Mr. Carpenter:

This will respond to your letter of July 5, 1974, to Chairman Ray, requesting AEC to address the safety aspects of an early return of a group of Enewetakese to live on DAVID (Japtan).

Detailed recommendations relating to return and cleanup are to be considered by the Commission about August 1, 1974. The question you raised about some Enewetakese returning to the Atoll before cleanup has not been addressed. The Task Group report, which is to be the basis of the staff recommendations to the Commission, does contain the following:

"The quarantine of YVONNE (Runit), put into effect by the Air Force on May 26, 1972, should be continued in effect until the cleanup of plutonium contamination on that island has been completed. Should any Enewetak people return to the Atoll before cleanup is begun or before completion, an authority responsible for enforcement of the quarantine should be identified and should be in residence in the Atoll when people return."

As to the matter of safety for an advance party, the results of the radiological survey show that there is no contamination on Japtan which would present a hazard to people living there. However, we would not recommend the return of people before cleanup and certification because:

1. There are a number of hazardous situations on the northern islands and access to these islands and certain foods produced thereon must be restricted.
2. Until qualified radiation monitors with proper equipment are available, scrap and other debris should be avoided. Movement of scrap which may be contaminated could spread contamination to the clean islands thus necessitating additional survey and cleanup.

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Stanley S. Carpenter

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3. The plutonium contamination on YVONNE (Runit) poses a special case because of the nature of the contamination and its toxicity.

4. There is unexploded World War II ordnance on JANET (Enjebi).

If, on the other hand, the Department of the Interior believes there is a benefit to be gained by return to Japtan before cleanup, we would interpose no objection provided the Trust Territory can assure effective measures for:

1. Observing the quarantine on YVONNE (Runit).
2. Restricting access to all islands prior to cleanup with the exception of those southern islands from ALVIN through KEITH.
3. Prohibiting removal and transport of scrap material from any of the northern islands.

In our view, your request represents an extension of what we consider to be AEC's role in the original interagency effort, namely, to prepare recommendations on whether the radiological conditions were such that a safe return could be made and on radiological criteria for cleanup. Consequently, we believe you should obtain the views of DOD and EPA before you make a final decision on an early return of some of the people.

We will be pleased to provide any advice or information we may have pertaining to the radiological situation. If we can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Department of Energy
Historian's Office
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bcc: GM
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MA

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Assistant General Manager
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